Chapter 8
THIS CONTAINS POISON.
MURMUR
ざわ
MURMUR
ざわ

SWISH
すっ SHF
MAO-MAO?!
WHAT'S WRONG?
DASH
WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT ...?
SHE LOOKED LIKE SHE REALLY ENJOYED EATING IT, THOUGH.
...WAS IT TRULY POISON ...?
CLAMOR
MORE IMPOR-TANTLY ...
CLAMOR

THE HONORED CONSORT'S SOUP WAS POISONED ?!
!
WHISPER
ヒソ-ヒソ
THAT CAN'T BE!
WHISPER
ヒソ-ヒソ
THAT WAS CONSORT GYOKUYO'S TRAY, RIGHT?
SNEAK
ソ-ッ
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
MINIS-TER?!
BUT THAT TASTER ATE IT JUST FINE!
BWUUURK!
URK!

WHO IN THE WORLD WOULD HAVE THE GALL?
ACTUALLY SERVING UP A DISH WITH POISON ...
HOW COULD THIS BE?
TMP
TMP

Chapter 8 The Garden Banquet ③

MY, WHAT A LIVELY FOOD TASTER WE HAVE HERE!
PTOOEY!
GOOD DAY TO YOU, SIR JINSHI!

IF ANYONE IS HAVING A GOOD DAY, IT LOOKS TO BE YOU.
MY FIRST TASTE OF POISON IN AGES HAS ME GRINNING LIKE A FOOL.
IT MIGHT LOOK AS IF I'M SMILING AT HIM...
GASP
I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE FROWNED UPON FOR A FOOD TASTER TO APPEAR TO BE SAVORING POISONED FARE...
...SO I HASTILY LEFT THE BANQUET.
WELL, AN ATTENDANT ACTING AS I DID...
...IS SURE TO DRAW IRE, I GUESS.
YANK

TAKING YOU TO THE PHYSICIAN, OF COURSE!
YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE YOU ATE POISON, BUT YOU'RE MORE THAN FINE?!
THAT JEST IS IN POOR TASTE!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

...OH. SO THAT'S WHAT HE'S MAD ABOUT.

DROOP
BUT THE TRUTH IS... I DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO SPIT IT OUT.
I SPIT OUT THE POISONED SOUP INTO A NAPKIN...
...SO I'M NOT EXPERI-ENCING ANY ILL EFFECTS.
...I'M SORRY.
TWITCH
IF I'D ACTUALLY DRUNK THE SOUP BACK THERE...
SHIVER
SHIVER
...MY ENTIRE BODY'D BE TINGLY AND GOING NUMB ABOUT NOW, AND—
SIR JINSHI ...
UM...

ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND?!
I'D PREFER "AMBITIOUS."
MAY I HAVE THE LEFTOVER SOUP?
GEH!
WHICH IDIOT WAS THAT?
...SOMEONE DOUBTED THE SOUP CONTAINED POISON AND ACTUALLY ATE IT.
BECAUSE YOU LEFT LOOKING IN FINE FETTLE...

RUSTLE
...JUST GIVE HIM A DOSE OF THIS EMETIC I MADE YESTER-DAY.
RUMMAGE
NOW WE HAVE A PARA-LYZED MINISTER ...
...AND THE BANQUET IN AN UPROAR OVER THERE.
IN THAT CASE ...
THAT SOUNDS ALMOST LIKE A POISON ITSELF.
GLINT
I CREATED IT TO INDUCE SUCH VIOLENT VOMITING THAT IT FEELS LIKE YOUR STOMACH'S BEEN TURNED INSIDE OUT.
TA-DAAA
I THINK HE CAN HANDLE IT JUST FINE.
HEY!
WE'VE GOT OUR OWN PHYSICIAN.

A NEW HAIR-PIN?
HERE. LEMME GIVE YOU MY HAIRPIN!
OH, I REALLY MUSTN'T...
COULD IT BE THAT...
...HE WAS A NO-SHOW AT THE BANQUET BECAUSE HE WAS INDECENTLY ENGAGED ELSE-WHERE?
LOOKING AT IT UP CLOSE, HIS COLLAR'S RUMPLED TOO.
WEARY
HE DOESN'T SEEM LIKE HIS USUAL SPARKLY SELF EITHER.
STILL ...
...HE LOOKS MORE LIKE A YOUNG MAN NOW.
ACTU-ALLY...

...HE LOOKS A LOT YOUNGER THAN USUAL.
WHAT IS IT?
OH!
.....
I WAS WONDERING IF YOU COULD BRING SOME-ONE TO SEE ME...

OFFICE
...AND SO I APOLOGIZE FOR ASKING YOU TO COME TO A PLACE LIKE THIS...
...THE PHYSICIAN AND HIS CHAMBERS ARE FULLY OCCUPIED ...
DUE TO THE INCIDENT WITH THE MINISTER ...
THANK YOU FOR BEING SO ACCOMMO-DATING.
THE HEAVENLY MAIDEN'S BACK.
...CON-SORT LISHU.
IT'S QUITE ALL RIGHT, SIR JINSHI!
I DON'T MIND IN THE LEAST!

THIS LADY-IN-WAITING IS THE ONE WHO WISHED TO SPEAK WITH YOU.
HUH?!
PFFT!
BOW
むっ
HUFF
...WHAT DO YOU WANT?
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
PLEASE EXCUSE ME.

?!
ばっ
LIFT

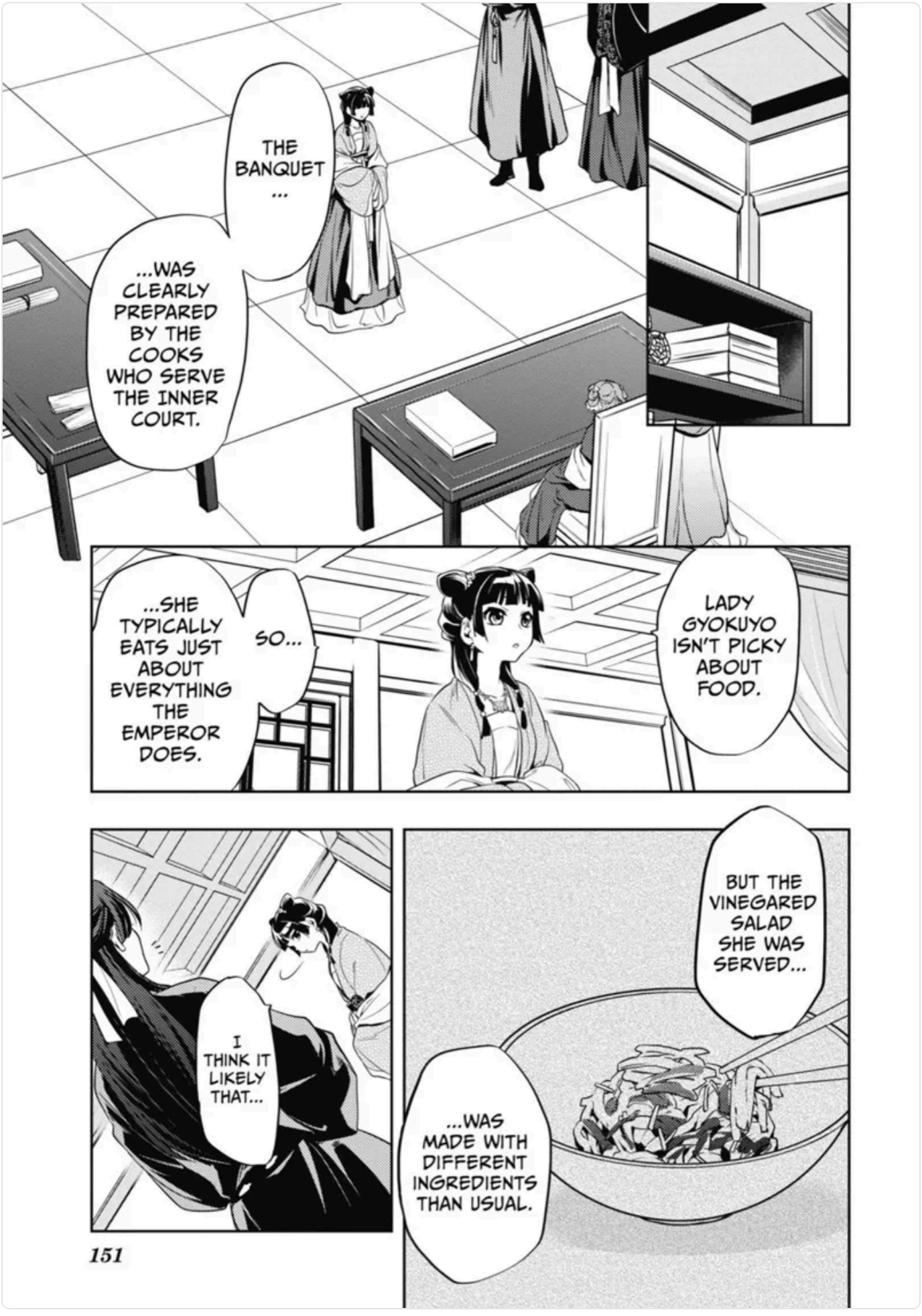
I KNEW IT.
FWIP
IT'S FISH AND SHELLFISH YOU CAN'T EAT, YES?
YOU HAVE A RASH.

147

EXPLAIN IT SO THAT WE CAN UNDER-STAND TOO.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
FISH ISN'T THE ONLY OFFENDING FOODSTUFF. THERE CAN BE ALL SORTS.
SOME PEOPLE ...
...HAVE CERTAIN FOODS THEY CANNOT EAT.
EVERYTHING FROM EGGS TO WHEAT, DAIRY PRODUCTS TO PEANUTS, AND SO ON.
THAT'S WHAT YOU CAN'T EAT?!
SIMILARLY, I CAN'T HANDLE SOBA NOODLES.

I DID TRY HARD TO BE ABLE TO EAT THEM ONCE.
LEAVE ME ALONE.
AGHAST...
EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE FINE EATING POISON ...?
...AND I WAS SLOW TO HEAL AS I FIGURED OUT WHAT AMOUNTS I COULD HANDLE.
A SMALL QUANTITY ALONE CAUSED ME TO BREAK OUT IN A RASH...
STILL, MY CHEST GREW TIGHT...
...AND IT BECAME VERY HARD FOR ME TO BREATHE.
THAT'S WHAT BEING UNABLE TO EAT SOMETHING ENTAILS.

...BUT I COULD MAKE YOU A LAXATIVE IF YOU'D LIKE?
!
YOU DON'T APPEAR TO BE NAUSEOUS OR HAVE CRAMPS...
NOD
LADY LISHU ...
IS YOUR STOMACH FEELING WELL?
...AND HEAR ME OUT.
THEN, PLEASE TAKE A SEAT...
GULP
SHAKE
SHAKE
150


THE BANQUET ...
...WAS CLEARLY PREPARED BY THE COOKS WHO SERVE THE INNER COURT.
LADY GYOKUYO ISN'T PICKY ABOUT FOOD.
SO...
...SHE TYPICALLY EATS JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING THE EMPEROR DOES.
BUT THE VINEGARED SALAD SHE WAS SERVED...
...WAS MADE WITH DIFFERENT INGREDIENTS THAN USUAL.
I THINK IT LIKELY THAT...
151

...BY SOME ERROR...
...THE MEALS MEANT FOR LADY GYOKUYO AND LADY LISHU...
...WERE SWITCHED.
TO BE PRECISE, IS IT MACKEREL AND ABALONE THAT YOU CAN'T EAT?
LADY LISHU ...
152

NOOOO!!!
!!
PALE
ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE FOODS THEY CAN'T EAT WOULD ALREADY BE AWARE OF THIS...
...BUT THIS MATTER OUTWEIGHS PERSONAL TASTES.

IF SOMEONE SERVED YOU THOSE FOODS KNOWING THIS...
IN THE WORST CASE, YOU COULD EVEN DIE.
...BUT IT COULD BE HEART FAILURE OR LABORED BREATHING DURING ANOTHER.
YOU WERE LUCKY THAT IT ENDED AT A CASE OF HIVES THIS TIME...
...IT'S THE SAME AS THEM TRYING TO POISON YOU.

I'M SURE YOU FELT IT WAS NEITHER THE TIME NOR THE PLACE...
...TO SAY ANYTHING IN PROTEST, MY LADY...
...BUT THAT DECISION COULD HAVE COST YOU YOUR LIFE.
YOU WERE LADY LISHU'S FOOD TASTER, YES?
YOU THERE, MISS...

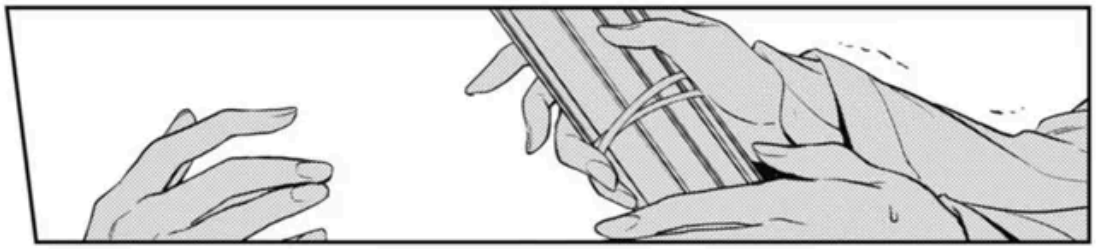
I...
I WAS!

IF YOUR MISTRESS HAPPENS TO INGEST THOSE KINDS OF FISH...
...PLEASE GET HER TO THROW THEM UP AT ONCE.

OF COURSE, MAKING SURE...
...SHE DOESN'T EAT THEM AT ALL IS BEST.

PRIOR TO YOUR ARRIVAL...
...I COMPILED AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST OF KEY POINTS AND PRECAUTIONS.
SHF
IT SHOULD NOT BE HARD TO FOLLOW.
BUT SHOULD YOU FAIL IN YOUR VIGILANCE EVEN ONCE...
...A SITUATION MAY OCCUR THAT NO PHYSICIAN CAN REMEDY.

TAKE CARE ...
...TO NEVER, EVER FORGET THAT.
TREMBLE



THAT THREAT OUGHT TO DO THE TRICK.

ANNOYED
WELL DONE.
...WOULD YOU PLEASE NOT TOUCH ME LIKE THAT?
FLICK
AS I AM BUT OF HUMBLE BIRTH...
I'M SURE THEY WERE ALL JUST BEING POLITE.
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO'S EVER COMPLAINED.

...I MUST RETURN TO LADY GYOKUYO AND MAKE MY REPORT.
I SHALL TAKE MY LEAVE OF YOU HERE AS WELL.
SSK
THAT BEING DONE ...

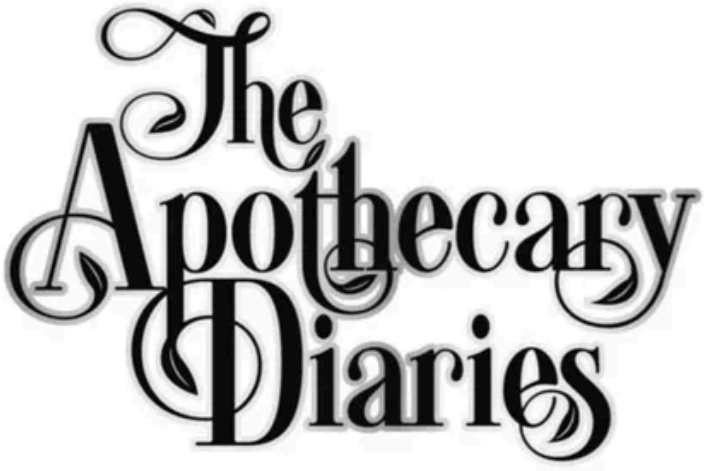
HALT
WAIT.

WHY ...
...DID YOU EXPRESSLY REQUEST HER FOOD TASTER JOIN US?
HM?
WHATEVER DO YOU MEAN?

I SIMPLY WANTED TO GIVE HER MY INSTRUC-TIONS.
YOU ASKED FOR THE ATTENDANT SPECIFI-CALLY.
DON'T PLAY DUMB.
THEN...
...YOU BELIEVE THE SERVERS TO BE AT FAULT?
THAT IS NOT FOR A LONE MERE LADY'S MAID LIKE MYSELF TO SAY.
.....

THEN, AT LEAST TELL ME THIS.
SIGH
AM I RIGHT IN THINKING THAT IT WAS THE VIRTUOUS CONSORT WHO WAS TARGETED TODAY?

PROVIDED NO OTHER DISHES WERE FOUND TO CONTAIN POISON...
...THEN YES, THAT WOULD SEEM TO BE THE CASE.
THE APOTHECARY DIARIES • End


The Apothecary Diaries

BONUS MANGA "SOFTHEARTED"
...BUT WITHOUT THEM, I'D PROBABLY FREEZE TO DEATH.
ヒュオオオ
WHOOOOSH
IT'S NOT SO BAD WITH THE HOT STONES AND THE BRAZIER...
パチ
CRACKLE
パチ
CRACKLE
I'M SOOO COLD!
EEP!
Story by Itsuki Nanao
Art by Nekokurage

.....
CRYSTAL PALACE LADIES-IN-WAITING
TREMBLE ブル
TREMBLE ブル
SHIVER ガク
SHIVER ガク
WHAT IS IT, MAO-MAO?
HMM?
UM...!
CRACKLE パチ
CRACKLE パチ
...WONDER IF I COULD ASK YOU SOMETHING ...
I...

GO AHEAD AND BRING THEM SOME.
CONSORT GYOKUYO IS FINE WITH IT.
THANK YOU SO MUCH.
MAO-MAO...
たっ TMP
たっ TMP
JOLT
ドクドク
SSK
すっ

?
SCURRY
SCURRY
INCH
EEP!
SCURRY
SCURRY
SCURRY
I HAVE HEATED STONES.
PLEASE HELP YOURSELF IF YOU'RE COLD.
THE CRYSTAL PALACE LADIES...
...SHOULD JUST SWALLOW THEIR PRIDE AND ACCEPT THE STONES ALREADY.
AWW!
FROM HERE, IT LOOKS LIKE A NEW FORM OF HARASS-MENT.
THAT ASIDE...

FOR MAOMAO TO ASK, "MAY I SHARE SOME OF OUR HOT STONES...
EEEE
EEK!
"...WITH THE OTHER LADIES-IN-WAITING WHO LOOK CHILLED TO THE BONE?"...
...AS SHE DID...
11 INCH
THAT MAO-MAO ...
WHEN ALL'S SAID AND DONE...
...SHE'S ACTUALLY A BIG SOFTIE AT HEART.
DID THEY TAKE THEM?
EVENTUALLY...

The Ladies-in-Waiting of the Jade Palace

Hongniang

HEAD LADY-IN-WAITING. IN HER THIRTIES. A BEAUTY WHOSE WORRIES SHOW ON HER FACE. HAS BAD LUCK WITH MEN, PERHAPS BECAUSE SHE'S SO TALENTED.

Yinghua

BIG PERSONALITY IN A RELATIVELY PETITE BODY. POSSESSES A CHEERFUL DISPOSITION, WHICH MAKES HER THE MOST TALKATIVE.

Ailan

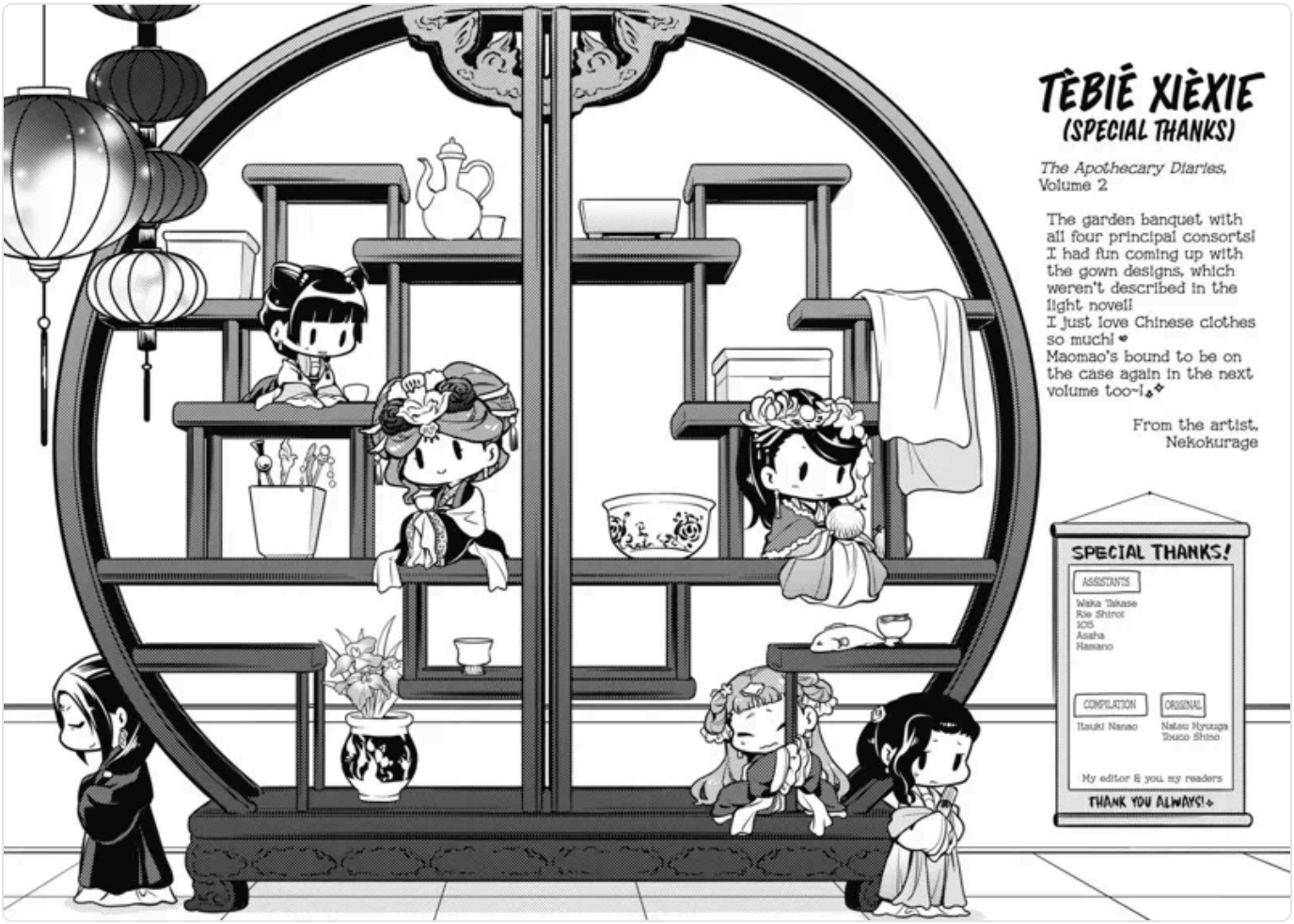
TIMID BY NATURE. OFTEN SEEN WITH HER EYEBROWS KNITTED IN CONCERN. THE TALLEST OF THE THREE.

Guiyuan

GENTLE AND PLUMP. THE FLUFFY HAIR IS PART OF HER CHARM.

Maomao

WOUND UP AS CONSORT GYOKUYO'S FOOD TASTER BY ACCIDENT. (*SEE VOLUME 1.) KEEPS GETTING DRAGGED INTO VARIOUS INCIDENTS UNAWARES AND IS LIVING A COMFORTABLE LIFE AT THE JADE PALACE.


TÈBIÉ XIÈXIE
(SPECIAL THANKS)
The Apothecary Diaries, Volume 2
The garden banquet with all four principal consorts! I had fun coming up with the gown designs, which weren't described in the light novel!
I just love Chinese clothes so much! ♥
Maomao's bound to be on the case again in the next volume too~!
From the artist, Nekokurage
SPECIAL THANKS!
ASSISTANTS
Waka Takase
Rie Shirot
105
Asaha
Hamano
COMPILATION
Itsuki Nanao
ORIGINAL
Natsu Hyuuga
Touco Shino
My editor & you, my readers
THANK YOU ALWAYS!

LIKE TWINS
Bonus manga
Art: Itsuki Nanao
I CARELESSLY LET THAT SLIP TO XIAOLAN. SHE DIDN'T NEED TO KNOW.
PRETTY MUCH.
OOH! SO YOUR FRECKLES ARE ACTUALLY DRAWN ON WITH MAKEUP!
SO DOES THAT MEAN I CAN DO IT TOO?
THEY LOOK SO NATURAL! I NEVER WOULD'VE GUESSED!
THAT'S AMAZING!
WHY DO YOU DO THAT?!
TELL ME!
WHAAT?!
...IS MARKING UP YOUR OWN FACE LIKE THAT REALLY FUN?
I KNOW I SHOULDN'T BE TALKING, BUT...
OOOH!

SPECIAL THANKS

Natsu Hyuuga

Touco Shino

Nekokurage

The editor

And you, the readers...

See you in the next volume!

Itsuki Nanao

FRIENDS...?
HELLO.
AH HA HA!
GEEZ!
THAT'S ENOU— AH HA HA!
IS CONSORT GYOKUYO AVAILABLE ...?
JUST A MOMENT, IF YOU PLEASE.
OH, SIR JINSHI!
GOOD DAY... SIR JINSHI.
.....
UH, THEY'RE JUST...
SHUDDER
そっ
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING WITH THOSE HANDS?!
FRIENDS
SEEING THEM LIKE THAT MAKES ME THINK OF XIAOLAN.
きゃーの CACKLE
きゃーの CACKLE
YOU'RE JUST IN TIME.
OH! WELCOME BACK, MAOMAO.
WE WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO FEEL...
?
...HEE HEE HEE! DON'T YOU FRET!
EEP!
TICKLE
こちょ
TICKLE
こちょ
...LEFT OUT!
Story by Itsuki Nanao
Art by Nekokurage

I WANT TO SEE YOUR SMILE!
WHAT, PRAY TELL, ARE YOU DOING TO MY ATTEN-DANT?
SIR JINSHI ...
...UH, WELL I JUST ...
WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU UP TO ...?
じり INCH
INCH じり
Story by Itsuki Nanao
Art by Nekokurage